

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 IO-12 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3641

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS PRIORITY

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS UNN

USMISSION GENEVA

COMICEDEFOR

NISRA/ KEFLAVIK

CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L REYKJAVIK 0573

E. O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR IC UK

SUBJECT: FISHERIES DISPUTE: POLITICAL EFFECTS IN ICELAND

REF: REYKJAVIK 0571

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: BRITISH DECISION TO SEND NAVAL PROTECTION
FOR TRAWLERS WITHIN ICELAND' S UNILATERALLY EXTENDED 50- MILE
FISHERIES JURISDICTION MAY HAVE DETRIMENTAL EFFECT ON US
INTERESTS IN ICELAND, NAMELY, RETENTION OF US- MANNED ICELAND
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DEFENSE FORCE (IDF). ALSO BRITISH ACTION HAS STRENGTHENED ELEMENTS, PARTICULARLY COMMUNISTS AND LEFTIST WHO ADVOCATE " HARD LINE" AGAINST BRITISH AND HAS COMPLICATED AND DELAYED CHANCES FOR NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. WORSE STILL, BRITISH ACTION HAS REDUCED CONFIDENCE IN NATO AS GUARANTOR OF ICELAND' S DEFENSE, SINCE SO FAR NATO HAS NOT YET INTERVENED IN DISPUTE. CRITICISM OF NATO COULD EASILY EXPAND INTO INCREASED PRESSURE TO TERMINATE IDF AT KEFLIAVIK. END SUMMARY.

2. PENETRATION OF ICELAND' S 50- MILE FISHERIES JURISDICTION ZONE BY BRITISH ROYAL NAVY VESSELS MAY 19 HAS AROUSED DEEPEST ICELANDIC NATIONALISTIC EMOTIONS. MOVE IS INTERPRETED BY ICELANDERS OF ALL POLITICAL OPINIONS AS ARROGANT AND CYNICAL VIOLATION OF SOVEREIGNTY OF SMALL PEACEFUL NATION BY AMJOR POWER LONG CONSIDERED AN ALLY. UNILATERAL EXTENSION OF FISHERIES LIMIT SEEN BY ICELANDERS WITHOUT EXCEPTION AS NECESSARY AND JUST TO ASSURE NATION' S CONTINUING CONOMIC VIABILITY. ALL INTERNAL DIFFERENCES OF OPINION REGARDING CONDUCT OF FISHERIES LIMITS ISSUE (WHETHER OR NOT TO APPEAR BEFORE INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE TO PLEAD CASE OR DEGREE OF CONCESSIONS TO OFFER IN BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS WITH BRITISH) HAVE BEEN OBLITERATED IN AN OVERWHELMINGLY UNITED REACTION AGAINST MILITARY THREAT TO SOVEREIGNTY. BRITISH RATIONALE LOST UPON SENSITIVE, EMOTIONAL AND INTENSELY ETHNOCENTRIC ICELANDERS. NATIONAL MYTHS CELEBRATE SURVIVAL IN A CONSISTENTLY HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT. ESCALATION OF FISHING DISPUTE MAY BE SEEN AS A CONTEMPORARY TEST OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL IN POPULAR CONSCIOUSNESS.

3. FACT THAT UK IS NATO PARTNER HAS IMMEDIATELY BROUGHT ICELAND' S DEEPLY- ROOTED DISTRUST OF ALLIANCES AND PREFERENCE FOR NEUTRALISM TO THE FORE. NATO IS POPULARLY REGARDED AS ALLIANCE WHICH ICELAND JOINED TO ASSURE ITS OWN PROTECTION. HENCE, BRITISH VIOLATION OF ICELANDIC LIMITS CALLS VALIDITY OF ALLIANCE INTO QUESTION INTO THE MINDS OF MANY. NEWS THAT UK INFORMED NATO OF ITS INTENDED MOVE BUT NATO TOOK NO ACTION IS POINT BEING EXPLOITED BY COMMUNIST- DOMINATED PEOPLE' S ALLIANCE (PA) AS PROOF THAT ICELAND SHOULD RESIGN SINCE ORGANIZATION DOES NOT SERVE ITS NEEDS. GOI IS CONSIDERING REQUESTING NATO ASSISTANCE IN DEALING WITH SITUATION, BUT AT LEAST EQUAL ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN TO RAISING ISSUE IN UN CONFIDENTIAL

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SECURITY COUNCIL. GOI IS INCREASINGLY AWARE THAT SUPPORT FOR ITS POSITION IS MORE LIKELY TO COME FROM THIRD WORLD COASTAL STATES IN UN THAN FROM NATO MEMBERS AND THAT UN IS A SUPERIOR PROPAGANDA FORUM. WHILE MODERATE GOVERNMENT ELEMENTS, INCLUDING PROGRESSIVE PARTY, AND OPPOSITION PARTIES CONTINUE TO LOOK TOWARD BOTH NATO AND UN FOR HELP, PA LEADERS HAVE UNHESITATINGLY CONDEMNED NATO, IMPLYING THAT AT BEST IT

IS USELESS AND AT WORST A DETRIMENT TO THE FURTHERANCE OF
ICELAND' S FISHING LIMITS CAUSE.

4. CRITICISM OF NATO INEVITABLY AND IMMEDIATELY INVOLVES
THE MOST IMPORTANT US POLICY OBJECTIVE IN ICELAND, THE
RETENTION OF THE IDF. THERE IS GENERAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE
USG' S POSITION OF NON- INVOLVEMENT IN THE FISHERIES DISPUTE
AND ITS CONCOMITANT DESIRE FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT.
HOWEVER, CONTINUED PRESENCE OF US- MANNED NATO BASE WHICH AS
INSTALLATION OF NATO IS INCAPABLE OF DEFENDING ICELAND
AGAINST A THREAT FROM A NATO ALLY CAN PROVE TO BE GROWING
IRRITANT AS LONG AS DISPUTE REMAINS UNSOLVED. COALITION
GOVERNMENT PLATFORM AGREEMENT TO STUDY DEFENSE AGREEMENT WITH
AIM OF REVISION OR TERMINATION OPENED MODERATE ELEMENTS
TO INFLUENCE FROM COMMUNISTS. PROGRESSIVE PARTY CONTAINS
MANY MEMBERS WHO FAVOR MEMBERSHIP IN NATO BUT OPPOSE IDF
PRESENCE. IN ATMOSPHERE OF IDMINISHED TRUST IN NATO, IDF
COULD BECOME CONVENIENT SCAPEGOAT TO SATISFY COMMUNIST AND
OTHER ANTI- IDF ELEMENTS DEMANDS TO LEVE THE ALLIANCE.
MODERATE ELEMENTS COULD TATIONALIZE COMPROMOSE REMOVING IDF BUT
RETAINING NATO MEMBERSHIP, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME FULFILLING
PLATFORM AGREEMENT.

5. COMMENT: UK MOVE HAS SEVERLY COMPLICATED OUR TASK OF
RETAINING THE IDF BY ESCALATING FISHERIES DISPUTE IN A
MANNER WHICH HAS ASSOCIATED THE TWO IN THE ICELANDERS' MINDS,
A DEVELOPMENT WE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PREVENT SINCE THE FORMA-
TION OF THE GOVERNMENT IN 1971. FORCES ARE NOW AT WORK WHICH
WILL UNQUESTION
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